

# House Armed Services Committee

DEMOCRATS

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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*For immediate release*    Contact: Loren Dealy, HASC Communications (202) 226-6339  
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## Skelton Questions Bush About Equipment Shortages

**WASHINGTON D.C.—Representative Ike Skelton (MO), Ranking Member, sent the follow letter to President Bush encouraging him to resolve shortages in protective military equipment as quickly as possible.**

Dear President Bush:

I am writing to you in your position as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Recently, as I am sure you are aware, troops serving in Iraq brought the lack of armored vehicles, specifically HMMWVs and other trucks, to the attention of the Secretary of Defense. His response that 'armor is not always a savior' was disappointing, to say the least. Armor may not protect our troops from all the threats they face in a complex combat environment, but it will reduce casualties. I know that is your foremost goal, as it is ours in Congress.

Congress has provided additional resources for armor in the last defense authorization and appropriations bills and in the supplemental spending bill. But we have seen that units continue to feel they need to find creative ways to meet their armor needs. Last December, community leaders and businesses in Jefferson City, Missouri, got together to provide makeshift armor plating to the troops of the 428<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. At that time I expressed my deep concern to the Secretary of the Army that we were sending troops into harm's way without the proper equipment. He assured me that the Army would do all it could to properly equip our soldiers.

Now, a year later, companies such as Armor Holdings Inc, which supplies armored vehicles and armor kits for unarmored vehicles, still have significant unused manufacturing capacity. Other armor manufacturing companies are also saying they have additional capacity as well. While the Department of Defense has increased procurement of these items, it has not come close to taxing the production capability of the industry. These assertions by companies make it difficult for us to understand where the backlog is. Since we have provided additional funds, why isn't all of the available industrial capacity being used? How are we energizing the industrial base to provide armor for the full range of ground vehicles in the theater?

I know you share both my concern for the welfare of our troops and my belief that when we commit troops to combat, we owe them the very best equipment. I urge you to direct the Department of Defense to increase production of these armored vehicles and armor kits to maximum capacity immediately, so that we can fully equip our brave men and women serving in combat.

Sincerely

Ike Skelton  
Ranking Democrat

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